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U S S R I N T E R N A T I O N A L A F F A I R S
ARMS CONTROL & DISARMAMENT

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MSU AKHROMEYEV WRITES ON VALUE OF ABM TREATY

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[Article by Marshal of the Soviet Union S. Akhromeyev, chief of the USSR Armed Forces General Staff and USSR first deputy defense minister: "The ABM Treaty Is an Obstacle in the Path of the Strategic Arms Race" -- capitalized words originally published in boldface]

[Text] The international situation remains tense and dangerous as a result of the arms race developed in recent years by the U.S. Administration and certain of its allies in the NATO bloc. American imperialism is clearly intending to further crank up the arms race and increase the military threat. This U.S. policy will lead to an increase in the military threat to all peoples.

However, in present conditions, if the forces struggling for peace act in a united front, it is perfectly possible to curb the aggressive forces and ensure a more lasting and stable peace.

The aims of preserving and strengthening peace are served by the talks that the Soviet Union is holding with the United States on nuclear and space arms. The accords between the USSR and the United States based on equality and identical security are an important contribution to lowering the military threat. The attainment of more reliable international security depends to a considerable extent on whether it proves possible to strengthen the international treaty basis of arms limitation -- to preserve and not destroy what already exists in this sphere and to conclude new agreements. The preservation from destruction of the treaty between the USSR and the United States on the limitation of anti-ballistic missile systems is of tremendous importance here.

I.

The road to achieving mutually acceptable solutions at the Geneva talks between the Soviet Union and the United States on nuclear and space arms is not easy, of course, but the Soviet Union, and this has been said at the highest level, is ready to travel its part of the way at these talks. However, as yet, the U.S. side is showing no intention of reaching agreement on the whole complex of problems at the talks and is refusing to work toward preventing the militarization of space.

The limitation, still more the reduction, of nuclear arms is inconceivable in conditions of the militarization of space. The creation and deployment in space of strike arms will inevitably lead to an increase in the quantity of and to the qualitative improvement of strategic nuclear arms. A close interconnection objectively exists between offensive and defensive strategic systems. That is the logic of nuclear confrontation. The creation of the large-scale space ABM system contemplated in the United States has a clear aggressive point: This system is a most important element in the integrated offensive potential of the side that has created it, undermines strategic equilibrium, and provides the opportunity for the United States to deliver a first strike in the hope that the retaliatory strike against U.S. territory can be averted.

How is the other side, the Soviet Union, supposed to behave under these conditions? It is left with no choice; it will be forced to ensure the restoration of the strategic balance and to build up its own strategic offensive forces, supplementing them with means of defense. Therefore, any attempts to limit strategic offensive armaments while creating strike space means are futile.

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The militarization of outer space is transformed into a means of uncontrolled arms race in all spheres and leads to a new and still more dangerous round in that race and the sharp weakening of strategic stability. It looks as though this is precisely what the United States is seeking today, having chosen as its means the creation and deployment in space of what it claims are ABM means, but are in fact strike weapons for strikes against targets belonging to the probable enemy in all spheres.

The U.S. leaders understood all this clearly long ago. Back in 1967 R. McNamara, at that time U.S. defense secretary, said that in response to the creation of an ABM system in the United States the Soviet Union "will have no option but to increase the potential capabilities of its offensive forces." Pursuing the same idea, Senator Kennedy noted: "As a result of the deployment of an ABM system, we will find ourselves involved in an arms race whose like the history of weaponry has never seen." The futility of this race was also recognized: According to the statement of former President R. Nixon, the most powerful ABM system that the United States could create would be unable to prevent catastrophic damage to the United States resulting from a missile strike.

The recognition of the objective interconnection between offensive and defensive strategic systems, of the role of large-scale ABM systems in provoking an arms race, and of the impossibility of securing advantages over the other side in that race had the result that as far back as during the first Soviet-U.S. talks on the limitation of strategic arms, which began in 1969 (SALT I), the sides arrived at the unanimous opinion that efforts must be focused primarily on the preparation of an accord on the limitation of ABM systems. This enabled the USSR and the United States to simultaneously conclude two important agreements in May 1972: the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems and the Interim Agreement Limiting Strategic Offensive Arms. Thus, principled and fundamental restrictions on ABM systems were accepted by the sides virtually from the very start of the strategic arms limitation talks and were an integral part of the relations and talks between the USSR and the United States as a whole.

The military-political significance of the Soviet-U.S. ABM Treaty is extremely great. This treaty is one of the foundations on which relations between the sides are based. By signing it the Soviet Union and the United States recognized that in the nuclear age only mutual restraint in the sphere of ABM systems will make it possible to advance along the path of limiting and reducing nuclear arms, that is, to curb the strategic arms race as a whole. This was reflected even in the preamble to the treaty, which openly points out that "effective measures to limit anti-ballistic missile systems would be a substantial factor in curbing the race in strategic offensive arms and would lead to a decrease in the risk of outbreak of war involving nuclear weapons."

In the treaty itself this approach is implemented in a number of specific and clearly formulated provisions. Thus, the treaty forbids the deployment of an ABM system for the defense of the territory of the United States and the USSR (that is, a large-scale ABM system) and the creation of a basis for a defense. Each side is authorized to have only a limited ABM system for a single area (the capital or an ICBM base), as part of which it can deploy up to 100 ABM launchers, no more than 100 ABM interceptor missiles at launch sites, and no more than a certain limited number of ABM radars.

To safeguard this, the main provision of the treaty, it is also forbidden to create, test, and deploy ABM systems or components which are sea-, air-, space-, or mobile land-based.

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The two aforementioned provisions, which are fundamental to limiting the sides' activity in the ABM sphere, are supplemented in the treaty by a number of other provisions obliging the sides not to give missiles, launchers, and radars that are not ABM means capabilities to resolve tasks of combating strategic ballistic missiles or their elements in flight trajectory and not to test them in an ABM mode; not to deploy large-scale phased-array radars except those provided for by the treaty or those installed to track targets in space; not to deploy radars for early warning of strategic ballistic missile attack except at locations along the periphery of the sides' national territory and oriented outward. The treaty forbids the development, testing, and deployment of MIRVed interceptor missiles, and also means for the rapid reloading of ABM launchers. Moreover, the sides pledged not to transfer to other states and not to deploy outside their national territory ABM systems or their components limited by the treaty.

The Soviet-U.S. Treaty on the Limitation of ABM Systems is the principled basis for further talks on limiting and reducing nuclear arms. Its mere existence opened up the prospect of further steps in this sphere. The interconnection between strategic defensive and offensive arms confirmed by its signing is enduring an objective in nature, irrespective of the technical level the development of those arms has reached. Moreover, the more sophisticated large-scale ABM systems were, the more they would influence the correlation between the sides' strategic potentials, would make it extremely unstable, and would destabilize the entire strategic situation.

The ABM Treaty has been force for over 10 years now; in this time the sides have examined it twice -- in 1977 and 1982 -- and agreed that it continues to accord with their interests and does not need changes or amendments. In the joint communique on the results of this examination the sides noted that the treaty is effective, thereby demonstrating the mutual commitment of the USSR and the United States to the aims of nuclear arms limitation and to the principle of identical security; it serves the interests of both sides' security, lessens the danger of outbreak of nuclear war, and is conducive to progress in further limiting and reducing strategic offensive arms.

If the treaty between the USSR and the United States on the limitation of ABM systems were to lapse [poteryat silu] for any reason, the foundation on which talks between the sides on nuclear arms limitation could be based and conducted would disappear. This would effectively mean the collapse of talks and an uncontrolled arms race for decades.

Washington knows all this, of course. The U.S. side is also naturally well aware of the stabilizing role of the ABM Treaty. Moreover, representatives of the American Administration miss no opportunity of speaking of the need to "strengthen the regime" of this treaty. However, in fact the United States has been malevolently undermining the Treaty on the Limitation of ABM Systems for a long time now.

II.

The U.S. Administration's actions in creating a new class of weapons -- space strike means -- are incompatible with the principles forming the foundation of the ABM Treaty. By proclaiming the "Strategic Defense Initiative" and embarking on the practical implementation of a large-scale anti-ballistic missile system with space-based elements, Washington is effectively working directly to undermine the treaty.

Certain U.S. leaders, especially Pentagon figures (for instance, R. Perle and others), making no secret of the United States' ambitious intentions with regard to space, are openly calling for the rejection of the ABM Treaty.

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The U.S. Administration denies that the "star wars" plans are incompatible with the demands of this most important document. It is maneuvering and seeking loopholes in the formulas of the treaty itself in order to justify in the eyes of the public its actions to militarize space. This is being done in a whole series of directions.

THE FIRST DIRECTION. The Washington leaders are arguing at length and even directly asserting that the work on a large-scale space ABM system implemented within the framework of the "Strategic Defense Initiative" is merely harmless technological research, the conduct of which, they claim, the ABM Treaty does not prevent. This thesis is widely propagandized by the U.S. mass media.

In reality, however, everything is different. The ABM Treaty (Article V) forbids the creation and testing of space-based ABM systems or components, that is, precisely the objective of the U.S. "harmless research." In practice the creation of specific models of strike space weapons and even the testing of some of them are in full swing in the United States. Lasers of various types, electromagnetic guns, interceptor missiles, and antisatellite systems are being developed in laboratories and at proving grounds. All this so-called "research work" is in contravention of the ABM Treaty.

THE SECOND DIRECTION. Representatives of the U.S. Administration, counting on the uninformed nature of the public at large, are claiming that the provisions of the ABM Treaty relate only to those ABM systems and components that existed at the time the treaty was signed. The means now being created and tested within the framework of the "Strategic Defense Initiative," they say, cannot be ranked as "ABM components" since they are not mentioned in Article II of the treaty.

The provisions of the treaty apply to any systems intended, as defined in Article II of the treaty, to counter strategic ballistic missiles or their elements in flight trajectory. Since the ABM components being created within the framework of the "Strategic Defense Initiative" are intended for precisely this purpose, that is, they are designed to replace the interceptor missiles mentioned in the treaty, all the provisions of the treaty fully apply to them, above all the ban on the creation, testing, and deployment of space-based ABM systems or components.

THE THIRD DIRECTION. The American authors of the "star wars" program are particularly zealous in propagandizing the thesis that the development of "exotic" anti-ballistic missile means (laser and beam weapons, and so forth) is not only not forbidden by the ABM Treaty but is even virtually encouraged by it. Thus P. Nitze, adviser to the President and the secretary of state on the Geneva talks, openly presents the creation of space-based ABM components based on other [inoy] physical principles as an action permitted by the ABM Treaty. For greater cogency references are made to the agreed statement accompanying the treaty (Paragraph E) [as published], which says that in the event ABM systems based on other physical principles and containing components capable of substituting, in particular, for interceptor missiles are created in the future, specific limitations on such systems and their components would be subject to discussion and agreement between the sides.

We are faced with a clear juggling of the facts. The aforementioned agreed statement regarding the treaty indeed does not rule out the possibility of the sides' acquiring anti-ballistic missile means "based on other physical principles," but only within the framework of the limitations envisaged by the treaty as a whole, in other words in the single authorized area. The large-scale ABM system with space-based elements that the United States is planning cannot be restricted to a single area. It is a territorial and even a global ABM system that is totally prohibited by the treaty. Therefore, the creation of laser, beam, and other such destructive components for that system is a direct violation of the treaty.

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THE FOURTH DIRECTION. Having embarked on a path leading to the destruction of the ABM Treaty, the U.S. leaders are trying to exploit the fact that the treaty itself envisages in principle the introduction of appropriate amendments to its text (Article XIV). Therefore, they are saying that the U.S. actions running counter to the treaty can somehow be legitimized, for instance, by revising this document and making amendments to it agreed with the Soviet side. They are making out that the Soviet Union too is no less interested in such amendments.

All this is merely an unworthy ploy aimed at reassuring public opinion. The U.S. side is well aware that by its actions it is not working toward making some additional clarifications to the sides' actions in the situations envisaged by the treaty, which, in fact, is what Article XIV is referring to. The United States is working toward changing the meaning of the treaty itself and emasculating it of its main content -- the ban on the deployment of an ABM defense of the country's territory.

The Soviet Union, of course, will not countenance the Treaty on the Limitation of ABM Systems being transformed into a cover for U.S. policy aimed at ensuring an arms race in the sphere of space anti-ballistic missile systems.

THE FIFTH DIRECTION. Charges that the Soviet Union is violating the provisions of the treaty are malevolently interwoven in the U.S. Administration's general line of undermining the ABM Treaty. Washington wants to make out that the USSR is taking some actions running counter to the ABM Treaty, and if that is so, then the Soviet Union, it says, must reconcile itself to what the United States is doing in this sphere.

More often than not in this connection the U.S. side speculates on the question of the Soviet radar station under construction in the Krasnoyarsk region. The farfetched argument that is adduced is that this radar is a station for early warning of missile attack and therefore should, or so it is claimed, be sited not in the Krasnoyarsk region but on the periphery of the USSR's territory and oriented outward, as Article VI of the treaty, which relates to early warning radars, demands.

However, the point is that the radar under construction in the Krasnoyarsk region does not fall within the restrictions of Article VI of the ABM Treaty. It has nothing to do with a system for early warning of missile attack. This station is intended for tracking of targets in space and the U.S. side has been told this. The U.S. side's attempt to continue to lay this "charge" against the USSR signifies only one thing -- justifying the course of undermining the ABM Treaty adopted by the United States itself.

The "accusations" leveled at the USSR, to wit, that it is testing air defense means for ABM purposes and, in this regard, that it is allegedly preparing to create an ABM system for the entire territory of the USSR, which is prohibited under the treaty, obviously serve the same purpose.

No preparation is taking place in the USSR for the creation of a territorial ABM system, and that also goes for one based on air defense means. No work is being done on air defense systems that would contravene the ABM Treaty.

The Soviet Union has repeatedly declared that the so-called "accusations" being made against it by the United States concerning noncompliance with the ABM Treaty are far fetched and at variance with reality. We advocate strict and absolute observance of this treaty and we consider it inadmissible to work toward its erosion, and still more to call into question the very prospect of its existence, as is being done by the United States, which has embarked on the path of the militarization of space.

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Washington's maneuvering around the ABM Treaty, attempts to transfer the blame for undermining it to the USSR, and even to pose in the public eye as virtually the custodian of the provisions which it contains confirm that the ABM Treaty retains all its importance and significance and, as before, it is an obstacle on the path of the nuclear arms race, an obstacle which those militarist circles in the West who are trying to smash the existing strategic equilibrium in the world and achieve military superiority over the USSR, would like to eliminate.

The USSR, and the Soviet leadership has stated this most definitely on several occasions, does not seek military superiority, but it will not permit such superiority over it either on the earth or via space. The initiators of "star wars" should not forget, Marshal of the Soviet Union S.L. Sokolov, USSR defense minister, stressed in his replies to a TASS correspondent's questions, that "the creation of space strike weapons will turn out, and will inevitably turn out, to mean a reduction in security both of the United States itself and of its allies."

The Soviet Union consistently and persistently advocates the ending of the arms race, and above all, the nuclear arms race. The straightforward way to this goal is to renounce provocative schemes of carrying the arms race over into space. If space strike arms are banned, and preparations for their creation are halted at the stage of scientific research work, broad opportunities will be opened up for a radical reduction of nuclear arms. The Soviet Union has already proposed a reduction of strategic offensive arms by one-fourth. Given the nonmilitarization of space, it is possible to carry out even more profound reductions. There is no other way of solving this issue. The sides' full implementation of all the provisions of the ABM Treaty is required to play an important role here.

The preservation and absolute implementation of the ABM Treaty is a guarantee for successful progression toward accords at the Geneva talks on nuclear and space armaments. As Comrade M.S. Gorbachev, general secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, has stressed, the arms race and disarmament talks are incompatible. The Soviet Union will not promote such a course. For its part, the Soviet Union will persistently seek in Geneva specific, mutually acceptable agreements that would make it possible to put an end to the arms race and carry forward the cause of disarmament.

ZUBKOV: U.S. VIOLATING SALT I'S BASIC PROVISIONS

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[From "The World Today" program presented by political observer Georgiy Zubkov]

[Text] Let us recall some of the provisions of the 1972 ABM Treaty and its 1974 protocol. According to this most important international document, the USSR and the United States adopted the pledge to station not more than 100 antimissile installations, not more than 100, and to set them up only in a radius of 150 kilometers. The Soviet-U.S. treaty obliges the sides not to create, test, or deploy systems or components for antimissile defense based in space. Let us also recall that according to this treaty, the USSR and the United States are not to pass antimissile defense systems or components for them to other states and may not station them outside their own national territory.

Why is it necessary to recall this? Because at the moment official Washington, while speaking in favor of the treaty, is in fact trying to revise it, to adapt it to the new circumstances of today. That is just what was stated by Paul Nitze, special consultant to the U.S. Administration.